

# EPIDIDYMITIS



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

An inflammation and infection of the epididymis, an oblong structure attached to the upper part of each testis.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Enlarged, hardened, painful testicle.
- Fever.
- Rapid onset of pain, heat and swelling at the back of one testicle (sometimes both).
- Tender scrotal contents.
- Tenderness of the second testicle (sometimes).
- Acute urethritis causing burning on urination (often).

### CAUSES

- Usually a complication of a bacterial infection elsewhere in the body, such as gonococcal infection of the urethra; prostate infection; or bladder or kidney infection.
- Epididymitis may also complicate an infection of the scrotum or be caused by scrotal injury.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Recent illness, especially acute or chronic prostatitis, urethritis, or urinary-tract infection.
- Urethral stricture.
- Indwelling urethral catheter.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Use rubber condoms during intercourse to protect from venereal disease. Don't engage in sexual activity with persons who have venereal disease.
- Avoid urethral catheters if possible.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable with treatment. Pain usually resolves in 1-3 days, but complete healing may take weeks or months.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Constipation (sometimes) because bowel movements aggravate pain.
- Sterility or narrowing and blockage of the urethra if the epididymitis involves both testicles. This requires surgery.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Laboratory studies, such as urinalysis and culture of prostate secretions, to identify the germ responsible.
- The goal of treatment is to combat infection and reduce pain and swelling. Treatment can usually be done at home.
- Support the weight of the scrotum and tender testicles. Roll a soft bath towel and place it between the legs under the inflamed area.
- Apply an ice bag to the inflamed parts to help reduce swelling and relieve pain. Don't use heat.
- Wear an athletic supporter or two pairs of athletic briefs when you resume normal activity.
- An exploratory operation may be necessary to make a firm diagnosis and save the testicle (rare).
- Surgical procedure may be necessary for severe cases not responding to antibiotics.

### MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics to fight infection.
- Ibuprofen or acetaminophen for mild pain; or stronger pain drugs can be prescribed for moderate to severe pain.
- Stool softeners.

### ACTIVITY

Rest in bed until fever, pain and swelling improve. Don't engage in sexual intercourse. Wait at least 1 month after all symptoms disappear before resuming sexual relations.

### DIET

- Don't drink alcohol, tea, coffee or carbonated beverages. These irritate the urinary system.
- Eat natural laxative foods, such as prunes, fresh fruit, whole-grain cereals and nuts, to prevent constipation.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of epididymitis.
- Pain is not relieved by measures outlined above.
- You develop fever.
- You become constipated.
- Symptoms don't improve within 4 days after treatment begins.